In the claims:

Please replace Claims 1, 7, and 8-9 with the following:

1.   (Amended)   A method for facilitating refunds in a postage metering system,
      the method comprising the steps of:
          receiving at a computer a request for a refund of a postage amount, the
      request being associated with a postage meter;
          using the computer for accessing a dispute account database for identifying a
      dispute account associated with the request;
          determining, via the computer, if a value in the dispute account is acceptable
      for permitting a refund of the postage amount; and
          at times when the value is determined to be acceptable for permitting the
      refund of the postage amount, refunding the postage amount to a user of the postage
      meter.

7.   (Amended)   A postage metering system comprising:
          a postage meter having a vault that accounts for postage dispensed by
      the postage meter and a processor for controlling operation of the postage meter;
          a data center in communication with the postage meter, the data center having
      a central processing unit and a dispute account database, the dispute account
      database having a dispute account associated with the postage meter;
          means for permitting communication between the postage meter and the data
      center;
          wherein at times when the data center receives a request for a refund of a
      postage amount for the postage meter the central processing unit determines if a
      value in the dispute account is acceptable for permitting a refund of the postage

amount and if it is the central processing unit initiates the refunding of the postage amount to a user of the postage meter.

8.   A postage meter system as recited In claim 7, wherein the central processing unit refunds the postage amount to the user by sending enabling data useable by the processor for adding the postage amount to the postage meter vault.

9.   A postage metering system as recited in claim 8, wherein the postage meter further includes a printing device that prints a receipt of the postage amount refunded.

Please add New Claims 11-21 as follows:

11.   (New) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising sending the request from the postage meter to the computer.

12.   (New) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the postage meter is remotely located from the computer.

13.   (New) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising maintaining a transaction record of the refunding at the computer.

14.   (New) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the postage amount correlates to a postage value previously dispensed by the postage meter.

15.   (New) A postage metering system as recited in claim 7, wherein the postage meter sends the request to the data center and the postage amount correlates to a postage value previously dispensed by the postage meter.

16.   (New) A postage metering system as recited in claim 7, wherein the postage meter is remotely located from the data center.

17.   (New) A method for facilitating refunds in a postage meter, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving at the postage meter a request for a refund of a postage amount;

accessing a dispute account in the postage meter to determine if a value in the dispute account is acceptable for permitting a refund of the postage amount; and

at times when the value is determined to be acceptable for permitting the refund of the postage amount, refunding the postage amount to a user of the postage meter.

18.   (New) A method as recited in claim 17, further comprising refunding the postage amount by adding the postage amount to a vault of the postage meter.

19.   (New) A method as recited in claim 17, wherein at times when the postage meter communicates with a remote data center sending a message from the postage meter to the data center to initiate the refunding of the postage amount to the user.

20.   (New) A postage meter comprising:

a processor that controls operation of the postage meter;

a vault that accounts for postage dispensed by the postage meter;

a dispute account having a value therein;

wherein at times when the postage meter receives a request for a refund of a postage amount the processor determines if the value in the dispute account is acceptable for permitting a refund of the postage amount and if it is the processor initiates the refunding of the postage amount to a user of the postage meter.

21.   (New) A postage meter as recited in claim 20, wherein the processor refunds the postage amount by adding the postage amount to the vault.